

Cancelled Zone Inspection Proves Costly



Damage controlmen eventually dewatered a flooded storeroom with an S-type eductor like the one this Sailor is hooking to a fire hose.

*By Ken Testorff,
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How important is a zone inspection? Ask the Sailors aboard an LHD where someone forgot to reschedule a required quarterly inspection that had been cancelled. The ship ended up with \$180,000 worth of ruined electronic parts in a storeroom.

A PO1 entered the storeroom and found 3 feet of water on the deck. He notified his chain of command but didn't tell the watch on the bridge or in damage-control central. As a result, flooding never was called away. Damage controlmen eventually dewatered the space with an S-type eductor.

Investigation of this mishap revealed that a blank flange on the open end of a firemain's ballasting line had leaked when someone opened an upstream valve that had been tagged out. Workers had installed the blank flange after an earlier minor flooding incident on the same firemain line. That incident also never had been reported to the bridge or the quarterdeck. When the store-

room flooded, the upstream valve had been tagged out for 23 months.

Because of this mishap, the CO ordered several changes to the zone-inspection program:

- Inspections must be done in a strict sequence. This move prevents any zones from going uninspected for long periods.
- Revised zones ensure the whole ship can be inspected in eight weeks. This change makes allowances for inspections that have to be cancelled because of operational commitments.
- New criteria define safety, material and damage-control discrepancies.
- When an area receives an unsatisfactory inspection, it must be reinspected within 48 hours.

This mishap also prompted training sessions to review standard procedures for notifying both the administrative chain of command and the emergency organizations during mishaps. The training was designed to eliminate the fear of reporting bad news. Here are other actions directed by the CO:

- A one-time review of tagout logs and inspection of seldom visited spaces to look for similar hazards.
- Department heads must be told about any tagout in effect for more than 30 days. Regular audits ensure that preventive- or corrective-maintenance actions get red-tagged if they aren't closed out in a timely fashion. ☺

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How To Do Zone Inspections

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So you've been assigned as a zone inspector. Now what? How do you inspect all those spaces effectively without taking an entire day? What do you look for?

Inspectors need to be alert for critical hazards. The following items should get first priority when you develop your zone-inspection discrepancy list:

Is the compartment free of frayed, loose or dead-end wires?

Are all white and red compartment lights working?

Are all compartment exits properly marked and free of obstructions?

Are all trunk-safety nets in place?



One area you should include on your zone-inspection discrepancy list is damage-control items. Repair-locker equipment, like this Sailor is checking, needs to be stowed properly and aligned.